Boston, Dec. 7. 1859.

Dear friend Webb;

I duly recd yrs. of the 10th Novr. beginning "My dear friend, Richard Davis Webb, I mean Samuel May Jr" (over which you may be sure we have had a many good laughs; *we* should make many such mistakes, I doubt not, if *our* boy — the "oriental youth" you speak of — were to drop in on us some fine day.) — in which note of Nov. 10th you mention Richard's safe arrival home, of which we heard with great pleasure. And, a day or two since, Richard's own note of Nov. 15th came to me, via New York. After so long being a wanderer, I hope he will not find it difficult to be a contented stayer-at-home. I believe it is usually a little hard, at first, to get the travelling habit out of one's bones.

In my last I gave you a brief account of a very remarkable man — though with the very unimposing name of *John Brown* — who, by a sudden inroad into Virginia with some 17 white and 5 colored men, had taken possession of the United States Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, had held for some two days possession of it and of the considerable town adjoining, and had sent a conscience-stricken ~~panic~~ fear throughout the State, and to a great degree through the whole Slaveholding South. Every day since his capture, the public interest in him has increased. There has been a genuine outburst of admiration throughout the North of his character, his courage, motives, principles, and his self-sacrifice, although very many disapprove of the means he employed. He underwent a wretched mockery of a trial before a Virginia Court, his case prejudged from the first, and his doom pre-determined, and was condemned to be executed on the 2d of December. He had

~~[illegible]~~ been taken prisoner by United States troops, ~~[illegible]~~ upon United States territory, having kept all the military force of Virginia at bay, and ought to have been tried in a United States Court. But Virginia meanly seized him, after the United States had ~~put~~ disarmed him and fettered him, and had now, as our best lawyers ~~admit~~ declare, "judicially ~~assassina~~ murdered" him, contrary to law as well as to right. Our present National administration were only too willing to have it so, ~~and~~ having neither spirit nor inclination to resist any demand of a Slaveholding State. And Brown knew, from the first moment, that his fate was sealed. During the six or seven weeks from the time of his capture to ~~the~~ his execution, his whole course has been thoroughly manly, brave, and consistent. It was obvious to every one that his composure was not assumed nor forced – that his claim to be actuated by a high sense of duty, in his effort to liberate slaves on a large scale, was in strict accordance with his known principles and purposes – that he really felt, as he declared, himself to be called of God to set free the slaves of America, or to be offered up a willing sacrifice in their behalf. Moreover, a tender heart, a kindly feeling towards all around him, an unaffected simplicity of speech and manner, have been strikingly conspicuous. His jailer, Mr. Avis, became warmly attached to him, and has proved his friendship by many considerate and kind acts, – sometimes allowing him the freedom of his own house, unfettered ~~unpinioned~~, sure that his confidence was not misplaced. You will see published some of Brown's simple but admirable letters, written from his prison – especially those to his wife and to his old schoolmaster; also accounts of his interviews with various persons, and particularly with certain slaveholding clergymen, who came to offer him their help in his brief remnant of life. These, from the first, he showed no respect for; to one he said, "I am willing to treat you as a gentleman but it must be as a heathen gentleman". And he said he would rather have some little slave-children, and an old slave-mother, go to the place of execution with him, and ask blessings on his head, than all the slaveholding ministers in the State. To one, who offered some argument in behalf of slavery, he said that he knew nothing whatever of christianity, and needed to learn the A. B. C. s of its first lesson. To the last, he never blenched nor faltered, but died with a perfect, and unquestionably most sincere, trust in God. He has left the lasting memory of a most heroic character. His name will be a watchword and signal for still more devoted and determined efforts against the Slave Power which rules and curses the country; and it shall yet be seen and felt that John Brown's unselfish consecration of his life to the cause of freedom has been the most powerful blow struck for many a long year at that "Sum of All Villainies" - American Slavery.

Very numerous meetings were held throughout the ~~Free~~ Northern States on the day of his death. The one in this city, ~~was~~ which was held in the ~~[illegible]~~ Tremont Temple, consisted of not less than 3500 persons, crowding the hall in every part, and great numbers going away, unable to gain admittance. It was addressed by Samuel E. Sewall, Esq., who presided, by Rev. J. S. Martin, and Rev. J. F. Clarke, of Boston, Messrs. Griffin and Davis of the State Legislature, and by Mr. Garrison, who spoke with great power and effect. You will see a full report in our papers.

In my previous letter to you, about John Brown, I think I alluded to the terror which his name inspired, in Kanzas, in the ranks of the Border Ruffians, and I believe I gave you to understand that he was connected with some very ~~[illegible]~~ harsh retaliatory acts, wherein the lives of several of these marauders were taken. I have since seen evidence which convinces me that these stories of John Brown are without foundation, and are indeed the malicious charges of men who, both for their personal enmity to him and their base desertion of the Free State cause in Kanzas, are unworthy of belief. Indeed it appears that the evidence before the Congressional Kanzas Investigating Com-

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exonerates Brown entirely on this head, and shows him to h been at a place 18 miles distant at the time of the commission of the murders alluded to; while it appears that he stands charged with these acts only by some evidence taken before an ex-parte, and wholly pro-slavery, Commit A "Life of John Brown" by Mr. James Redpath, a gentlem Who has known him long & intimately, is soon to appear; a in this, and other similar publications, as well as in the public journals, the whole truth will be ~~known~~ brought to light, Certain is that ~~the~~ this man has manifested, to the conviction of b enemies and friends, as well as of persons heretofore wholly ignorant of him, some of the very loftiest, noble and most truly Christian characteristics, which have ever adorned, or which can adorn, our human nature. So wide-spread has become the popular interest, and even admiration, that the Pro Slavery men in various ~~parts~~ cities of the North are getting up counter-meetings, with a view to "re-assure our Southern brethren" that the North mean strictly to observe ~~strictly~~ all its obligations to them & to the Un A meeting of this sort is to ~~either~~ come off in this city tomorrow supported almost entirely by men either in the pay of Presiden Buchanan and of the Pro Slavery Democracy, or who striving to become so, and wish to commend themselves by their fawning. Their movement is pretty thoroughly & generall understood, and is despised, as its deserves to be, by every honest lover of freedom.

I will endeavour to execute the various comm you send me for Mrs. Palmer, and others. — Mrs. Dall book is soon to be out, I understand. — As to the "Friends" their shameful Pro-Slavery course, there is abundance of evidence; but as S. J. May has taken in hand that matte I shall leave it to him. I recently sent him a document, concerning the North Carolina Friends. If he doesn't soon send the evidence wanted, you would do well to call on J. Miller McKim, — or, if you choose, on me. — I am sorry to say, health is not good, and I don't keep up with my work. — Aff'ly Yrs. S.

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P.S. 21 Cornhill, Boston. Dec. 12, 1859

I forgot to allude to the fact that, in the steamer which sailed hence 2 weeks since, for Liverpool, went a man who represented himself as one of John Brown's company at Harper's Ferry. Whether he was so, or not, we do not certainly know. I had some doubts of him at the time, but W. L. G. felt no doubt, & gave him a letter to you. He was to leave the Steamer at Queenstown if she stopped there. To-day Wendell Phillips expressed some doubt of the man. We do not absolutely decide the point *against* him; indeed Mr. G.'s faith in his account of himself remains unshaken. He bore the assumed name of John Wilson — he did not declare his real one. I saw him but a few moments, just as he was leaving to go to the Steamer, and W. L. G. was closing up the letter and directing it to you. You should know just how this is, so far as we know it. Do not be compromised by him. — I asked G., at the moment, if he had full credence that the man's story was true; he said, *he* felt *entirely satisfied*. And he (G.) may be quite right, but, like others, is deceived sometimes.

The Proceedings of the Methodist Conference (desired by Mrs. Palmer) will not begin to be published until May next. Gerritt Smith's pamphlet is out of print, but I may pick up a copy. "Peter Still's Life" is not now to be had in the city, but I shall probably get one,

My confidence in "Wilson" from what I have seen of him is absolute. I am naturally suspicious — R. D. W.

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